

## CHAPTER XVI

“She has come to stay with me,” said Princess Mary. “The count and countess will be here in a few days. The countess is in a dreadful state; but it was necessary for Natásha herself to see a doctor. They insisted on her coming with me.”

“Yes, is there a family free from sorrow now?” said Pierre, addressing Natásha. “You know it happened the very day we were rescued. I saw him. What a delightful boy he was!”

Natásha looked at him, and by way of answer to his words her eyes widened and lit up.

“What can one say or think of as a consolation?” said Pierre. “Nothing! Why had such a splendid boy, so full of life, to die?”

“Yes, in these days it would be hard to live without faith...” remarked Princess Mary.

“Yes, yes, that is really true,” Pierre hastily interrupted her.

“Why is it true?” Natásha asked, looking attentively into Pierre’s eyes.

“How can you ask why?” said Princess Mary. “The thought alone of what awaits...”

Natásha without waiting for Princess Mary to finish again looked inquiringly at Pierre.

“And because,” Pierre continued, “only one who believes that there is a God ruling us can bear a loss such as hers and... yours.”

Natásha had already opened her mouth to speak but suddenly stopped. Pierre hurriedly turned away from her and again addressed Princess Mary, asking about his friend’s last days.

Pierre’s confusion had now almost vanished, but at the same time he felt that his freedom had also completely gone. He felt that there was now a judge of his every word and action whose judgment mattered more to him than that of all the rest of the world. As he spoke now he was considering what impression his words would make on Natásha. He did not purposely say things to please her, but whatever he was saying he regarded from her standpoint.

Princess Mary—reluctantly as is usual in such cases—began telling of the condition in which she had found Prince Andrew. But Pierre’s face quivering with emotion, his questions and his eager restless expression, gradually compelled her to go into details which she feared to recall for her own sake.

“Yes, yes, and so...?” Pierre kept saying as he leaned toward her with his whole body and eagerly listened to her story. “Yes, yes... so he

grew tranquil and softened? With all his soul he had always sought one thing—to be perfectly good—so he could not be afraid of death. The faults he had—if he had any—were not of his making. So he did soften?... What a happy thing that he saw you again,” he added, suddenly turning to Natásha and looking at her with eyes full of tears.

Natásha’s face twitched. She frowned and lowered her eyes for a moment. She hesitated for an instant whether to speak or not.

“Yes, that was happiness,” she then said in her quiet voice with its deep chest notes. “For me it certainly was happiness.” She paused. “And he... he... he said he was wishing for it at the very moment I entered the room....”

Natásha’s voice broke. She blushed, pressed her clasped hands on her knees, and then controlling herself with an evident effort lifted her head and began to speak rapidly.

“We knew nothing of it when we started from Moscow. I did not dare to ask about him. Then suddenly Sónya told me he was traveling with us. I had no idea and could not imagine what state he was in, all I wanted was to see him and be with him,” she said, trembling, and breathing quickly.

And not letting them interrupt her she went on to tell what she had never yet mentioned to anyone—all she had lived through during those three weeks of their journey and life at Yaroslávl.

Pierre listened to her with lips parted and eyes fixed upon her full of tears. As he listened he did not think of Prince Andrew, nor of death, nor of what she was telling. He listened to her and felt only pity for her, for what she was suffering now while she was speaking.

Princess Mary, frowning in her effort to hold back her tears, sat beside Natásha, and heard for the first time the story of those last days of her brother’s and Natásha’s love.

Evidently Natásha needed to tell that painful yet joyful tale.

She spoke, mingling most trifling details with the intimate secrets of her soul, and it seemed as if she could never finish. Several times she repeated the same thing twice.

Dessalles’ voice was heard outside the door asking whether little Nicholas might come in to say good night.

“Well, that’s all—everything,” said Natásha.

She got up quickly just as Nicholas entered, almost ran to the door which was hidden by curtains, struck her head against it, and rushed from the room with a moan either of pain or sorrow.

Pierre gazed at the door through which she had disappeared and did not understand why he suddenly felt all alone in the world.

Princess Mary roused him from his abstraction by drawing his attention to her nephew who had entered the room.

At that moment of emotional tenderness young Nicholas' face, which resembled his father's, affected Pierre so much that when he had kissed the boy he got up quickly, took out his handkerchief, and went to the window. He wished to take leave of Princess Mary, but she would not let him go.

“No, Natásha and I sometimes don't go to sleep till after two, so please don't go. I will order supper. Go downstairs, we will come immediately.”

Before Pierre left the room Princess Mary told him: “This is the first time she has talked of him like that.”